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River District Board Supports Spring Shoshone Call Reduction Plans, with Stipulations

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, CO - The Colorado River Water Conservation District Board of Directors unanimously approved a motion agreeing to cooperate with a temporary spring call reduction at the Shoshone Power Plant on the Colorado River.

River District staff has been directed to draft a written agreement governing how this call reduction will be implemented to limit negative impacts to the West Slope, while allowing upstream reservoirs to optimize storage during the early spring runoff.

Denver Water has proposed compensating Xcel Energy, owners and operators of the Shoshone hydroelectric power plant in Glenwood Canyon, in exchange for reducing the amount of Colorado River water the power plant uses for hydroelectric generation. Denver Water, and possibly other Front Range entities, would reimburse Xcel Energy for revenue lost from not running the power plant to its full capacity.

By reducing the amount of water that the plant requires, upstream reservoirs will be able to store inflows that would otherwise have to be bypassed and keep water that would otherwise have to be released to satisfy the water right. Most major West Slope reservoirs are perilously low as the state enters into its sixth straight year of below average precipitation. Green Mountain Reservoir, which fulfills water needs for many West Slope water users, will gain added insurance that it will fill this spring as a result of this agreement. Denver Water's Williams Fork and Dillon reservoirs stand next in line to benefit, and Wolford Mountain Reservoir, which serves both the West Slope and Denver Water, should also see an increase in storage.

Denver Water additionally promises to earmark 10% of the water that they will gain from a call reduction to be returned to the West Slope, providing additional water for the Fraser, Blue and Colorado Rivers.

The vote by the River District lends additional momentum to Denver Water's proposal. Xcel Energy has stated that they did not wish to proceed without consensus from West Slope interests.

"Ultimately it's not our decision to make. What we're providing is input on conditions for an agreement," said Eric Kuhn, General Manager of the River District.

The River District Board stipulated that:

- The West Slope has not waived its right to object to future call reduction proposals and wants language in the agreement mentioning the extreme hydrologic conditions under which this agreement was reached.
- The call reduction on the Colorado River should not be allowed to cause negative impacts up the Roaring Fork River, which joins the Colorado River at Glenwood Springs. As agricultural irrigators in the Grand Valley begin to place calls for water to meet their irrigation needs in late March and early April, careful river management will be necessary to prevent junior water rights on the Roaring Fork from being called-out because of the Shoshone arrangement.
- Call reduction scenarios must not negatively impact the summer commercial rafting season on the Colorado, which begins in earnest in late May and provides great economic benefits for West Slope communities.
- All parties agree to work closely together while the call reduction is in place to manage river flows and avoid potential problems for West Slope communities and water users.

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